



Oceana NAS - Blue Angels Trip

September 9, 2016

The Richmond Council Navy League returned to Oceana Naval Air Station with a full bus load of guests and members to watch our servicemen and servicewomen demonstrate their skills on a hot and humid Virginia day.

Practice day is an actual full show, but with access limited to military family, school groups, and special invited guests like the Navy League. We were fortunate to be there with a just a few thousand people rather than the weekend show when over 100,000 try to get in and out each day.

On the ground were many aircraft on static display. It was a pleasure to talk to the many professional and polite crew members who truly appreciated our questions and interest.

In the air, there were both civilian and military aircraft and performers. Highlights included the staggered take-off of eight F/A-18 Hornets for an air power demonstration and simulated air-to-ground bombing runs with fuel detonated between the runways. The two most impressive displays of absolute raw power were by the F/A-18 Super Hornet, and the Air Force F-22 Raptor. At one point, the F-22 was accompanied by its predecessor of 65 years, the P-51 Mustang.

The Blues came at the end of the program, completely choreographed with activities by the ground crew and flight crews alike. The stunning colors of blue with gold accent-stripe jets flying with precision in close formation kept everyone's eyes to the skies. The *United States Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron* mission statement is, "to showcase the pride and professionalism of the United States Navy and Marine Corps by inspiring a culture of excellence and service to country through flight demonstrations and community outreach."

None of this would be possible without the dedicated staff of the Blue Angels who come from the ranks of regular Navy and Marine Corps units. This comes at a human price. This year was especially poignant, as the Blues lost one of their pilots in a crash earlier in the year. *Does your day job involve risk?*

We salute the men and women of our Armed Forces. For more information, see www.blueangels.navy.mil